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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 001805

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TAGS: PGOV PINS PREL AF TU

SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: TURKEY REPORTS TALIBAN INFILTRATION
IN THE NORTH; DOSTUM UNDER PRESSURE

REF: ANKARA 1398

Classified By: Polcouns Janice G. Weiner, reasons 1.4 b, d

¶1. (U) This is an action request. Please see para. 7.

¶2. (S) SUMMARY. Turkey is learning about new alleged ISI and Taliban-affiliated groups that have emerged in northern Afghanistan that are hostile to General Abdul Rashid Dostum. Dostum believes the Karzai government is also providing weapons to these groups, with an aim to creating instability that will be blamed on him. MFA is concerned that Dostum is feeling cornered, potentially threatening stability in the north and creating conditions favorable to the Taliban further establishing itself there. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (S) MFA Deputy Director General for South Asia Babur Hizlan called us in to follow-up on the Ambassador's June 5 meeting with Deputy U/S for Middle East and South Asia Feridun Sinirlioglu, where they discussed events in northern Afghanistan (reftel). On a positive note, Hizlan reported that Dostum has maintained calm in Jowzjan Province during the traditional commemoration period for those killed by police during May 28 demonstrations by his supporters, in Sheberghan. Dostum, however, reported some alarming developments to Turkey's Ambassador to Kabul, Ethem Tokdemir.

According to Hizlan, Dostum told Tokdemir that two new ISI/Taliban-affiliated groups -- hostile to the General's leadership -- have emerged in the north, threatening stability there.

¶4. (S) The first group, according to Hizlan, is an organization called the Islamic Shura of Turkic Origin People (aka Turkic Islamic Council of Afghanistan), led by a man named Akbar Bay. Dostum maintains that the group is affiliated with the ISI and the Taliban, and that it recently received a shipment of 200 guns. Hizlan told us that Seyid Nurullah, Acting Chairman of the Junbesh-i-Milli, visited the Turkish Consulate General in Mazar-e-Sharif a few days ago and informed the Turks that Akbar Bay is being "massively armed by some elements in the government in Kabul." The second group is organized around Abdul Malik -- the former deputy of Dostum whose earlier defection to the Taliban brought down the Northern Front. According to Dostum, Malik is being supplied weapons (53 Kalashnikovs were recently delivered to his house) by a person named Keremullah -- an associate of Gazi Kebir. Kebir is a former parliamentary candidate and governor of Takhar Province, whom Karzai appointed to the House of Elders. According to Hizlan, Kebir is a strong critic of Dostum, who he says is not Islamic enough.

¶5. (S) In addition, Hizlan reported that numerous Uzbek

militants driven out of North Waziristan regrouped in Baluchistan, aligned with the local Taliban there, and are now in the north pressuring the Uzbek administration, threatening stability in both Afghanistan and Uzbekistan.

¶6. (S) Hizlan said these allegations still need to be confirmed, but emphasized that if a fraction of what Dostum and other informants say is true, then the Taliban is already infiltrating the north. Regardless of whether the allegations are factual, Dostum perceives them to be true, meaning that he is feeling cornered by the ISI, the Taliban and the Karzai government -- a destabilizing situation. Before May 2007, he said, Turkey had been trying to put some distance between itself and Dostum (despite their traditionally close ties) because of the brutality with which Dostum's people handled Junbesh Parliamentary Group Chairman Feyzullah Zeki Ibrahim, who is now recovering at a hospital in Uzbekistan. Nevertheless, the events of May 2007 forced Turkey to deal with him again, and he is talking to the Turkish Ambassador.

¶7. (C) COMMENT/ACTION REQUEST. Evidenced by significant military and reconstruction assistance, and recent efforts to broker dialogue and cooperation between Presidents Karzai and Musharraf, Afghanistan is a major foreign policy priority for Turkey. It is also a subject on which GOT has shown a desire to continue to work closely with us. Post would appreciate any information that could corroborate the information reported in this cable and that we could share with the GOT.

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